HOW TO WRITE FOR 80-MICROCOMPUTING

Writing for *80-Microcomputing* is a great way to become rich and famous (probably a lot more of the latter than the former, too!). In all seriousness, it can be profitable. We pay quite well for accepted articles. If you're always looking for those extra dollars to buy this or that peripheral, writing for *80-Microcomputing* is certainly one way to do it! (And, of course, it always looks good on a resume to have been published professionally.) But—and this is certainly important—you needn't be a professional writer to sit down at the old typewriter and pound out an article for *80-Microcomputing*. Here are some guidelines to help you along.

What to Write About

Computer hobbyists are anxious to know all they can about the design of commercial products . . . each board of a system . . . why it was designed the way it was . . . what the benefits of that configuration are to the user and what trade-offs there were. If a certain CPU chip was picked, why was this one picked? If a new memory chip is used, why?

The more insight all of us can get into the reasons why systems were designed, the more all of us will understand the equipment we all have to work with.

Let's say you've designed a new board. You've also developed construction plans for the board so readers interested in duplicating your work can do so. Maybe you've come up with a source of kits. Readers will want to know why the board was designed the way it was.

You may have some mods for commercial hardware, which you think other will want to know about—and perhaps try. Write.

In all of these cases the more honest the writing the more credibility that will be gained.

There is also a giant need for software. Perhaps you've written some programs that you'd like to see out where they can be used. You'll become known in the process, and you'll get top dollar from *80-Microcomputing* for your work.

We'd like to see more articles on the use of microcomputers in business applications. If you have a useful piece of business software, by all means write it up for *80-Microcomputing*. There's also a need for reviews of business systems. Businessmen want to know which hardware items work well together—with a minimum of hassle—and what a computer can do for them.

Educational programs are going to be BIG. If your kids are happily learning math, spelling or any other subject with the aid of your micro, please share your programs with the rest of us.

And let's not forget control-type applications. If you're using your micro to water the lawn, feed the dog and generally make life easier, that certainly has the makings of an interesting article.

Longer programs that you'd prefer to sell can be published and distributed on cassette or disk by our own Instant Software, Inc. Such programs are sold though computer stores and via mail order . . . with royalties just like book royalties.

Short programs, algorithms and program modules can be most valuable to programmers —so send them to *80-Microcomputing* for publication. Think how valuable a library this will make eventually.

You can do worse than keep a detailed notebook of your problems with any system you buy . . . and your solutions to the problems. This will be of great interest to those following in your steps later on—so keep notes and send them to *80-Microcomputing* for possible publication.

One thing: Please try hard to use as few buzzwords as possible. Remember that *80-Microcomputing* is trying to bootstrap newcomers into this field, not scare them away. If you understand your subject, you shouldn't have to be obscure.

If you're doing experimental work in an advanced field that interests us, you might write about that. We make a particular effort to keep *80-Microcomputing* ahead of the other magazines in publishing new discoveries and advancements. Remember that you're writing for the average computer hobbyist, not engineers. This is *80-Microcomputing*, not *EDN* or *Computer Design*.

The Plan of Attack

Generating an outline of your proposed article is perhaps one of the most important steps you can take (as well as, of course, sticking to it and not getting sidetracked). Remember the old rule: "Tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you've told them." A construction article might be arranged as follows: Introduction, Theory, Construction, and Alignment and Adjustment, concluding with a wrap-up of results.

The title and opening paragraph are extremely important! If you don't convince the reader in beginning that he *should* read on, the chances are he won't. Illustrations and photos shouldn't be overlooked either. An article without either can certainly appear to be dry . . . even if it isn't.

When writing, remember that *80-Microcomputing* is an informal hobby magazine and that you're writing for some friends. Don't be a stuffed shirt. Keep away from "the author"; use the first person ("I"). Use active rather than passive voice. "I fastened the nut" is better than "the nut was fastened." Write in short, concise sentences, starting a new paragraph with each new thought.

Avoid unneccesary abbreviations and capitalizations. Use subheadings for each new section to provide signposts for the readers. Dictionaires are too inexpensive these days for there to be any excuse for misspelling: take some time and look it up.

Minimize math. It is rarely necessary in *80-Microcomputing* articles and scares readers. While most readers can use simple high-school algebra and trig, they don't want to. They prefer practical circuits or practical approaches to a subject. Even engineers prefer predesigned circuits, if only as a starting point for their own work. Use math only where it is vital.

Avoid footnotes, if possible, and just put your references in the text (it's easier to read that way). And don't forget to give credit when you borrow an idea from someone else. This is important both ethically and legally.

If you write a product or system review, send a copy of the manuscript to the company first so they can check it for accuracy and make any necessary comments.

Put all drawings on separate sheets of paper —never in the text. We have excellent draftsmen who redraw all diagrams and schematics, so be sure that your sketches are complete, neat and readable. Put parts values on the schematic rather than in a separate parts list. Use terms "IC1," "R1" and "C2," etc., only if your are referring to them in the text. If a block diagram will be helpful in getting the "big picture," then by all means include one. Label all drawings as Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and so on. Be sure to sequentially reference figures in the text. Write a caption for each and include this with the article text so our typesetters will be able to set the type. *Put your name and page number on every sheet of paper you submit.*

All logic diagrams should reflect signal flow from left to right . . . and, if possible, not have signals enter or exit the diagram *except* from the left to the right sides, respectively. Logic symbols must be of the *distinctive shape* variety (use the symbols of ANSI X3.5-1970). Also, the logic symbols (gates in particular) should reflect the logic function being performed . . . a schematic with all NAND or all NOR gates usually doesn't.

Programs, Listings, Etc.

All programs should be well commented. There should be a column for address (symbolic, octal, hex or statement number), a column for the instruction or statement and a column for the comments (or liberal use of "REMark" statements in a BASIC program). Memory dumps should be used only if a pro-

gram is extremely long (in such cases you might do well to make arrangements to sell the program for the cost of duplication, or whatever). Flowcharts are fine, too, and a list of variables is helpful.

Abbreviations

Don't make any rash assumptions regarding abbreviations. If you have any doubt, be sure to spell the words out the first time you use them. We use the NSB-accepted abbreviations: Hz, kHz, MHz, uF, pF, mH, uH, H, W, mW, uW, V, mV, kV, A mA, uA, dB. Do not use periods or pluralize the abbreviations. Separate them from the number: 10 MHz, not 10MHz.

Photographs

Good photographs use up a lot of space and make an article much more interesting. If you can't locate a well-equipped amateur photographer, you should use a professional. The amateur will probably do the job in exchange for a credit line in your article. The professional will, of course, charge you a fee, but the article will probably bring you at least that much more. Photos 5" × 7" are OK but 8" × 10" are preferred. Instamatics and Polaroids just don't cut it. You'll want an overall photo of the equipment, plus views of any area that will be helpful to the reader who wants to duplicate your effort. Again, captions are separate and can be put at the end of the article text. (Number the back of each photo, along an edge, to correspond with each caption. *Do not* use felt-tip pens! Their ink tends to bleed through and ruin the photographs.) *Do not* use figure numbers for photos.

The Manuscript

Use regular typing paper (*not* the erasable type) and double-space your manuscript, leaving wide margins. Number the pages when you put your name on each page. Do not type titles, subtitles or text in all capitals. **Manuscripts that are single-spaced and/or typed in all caps will automatically be returned for revision.** Underlining a word indicates that it is to be italics. Keep a carbon copy . . . just in case. Send up the original. Each page of typed copy will be equal to about one-sixth of a page in *80-Microcomputing*.

Submission

Send your manuscript, first class, to:
80-MICROCOMPUTING
80 Magazine St.
Peterborough NH 03458
We'll let you know our reaction as soon as possible. If you wish to receive an acknowledgement from us of receipt of your manuscript, include a self-addressed, stamped postcard or send the manuscript by certified mail. Should your manuscript be accepted, please be patient about the receipt of check and proofs.

Never submit your manuscript to more than one publication at the same time. We will automatically reject such material.

Payment depends on a manuscript's interest, uniqueness, how well prepared it is, how much work is involved for us in preparing it for publication and how well known you are. It normally runs around $35 to $50 per printed page. We estimate the length of the article as best we can, and your payment is final. If you think we've made a bad mistake, let us know before you cash your check.

One the article has been paid for, it belongs to *80-Microcomputing* with all rights reserved. Acceptance and payment do not guarantee publication. It will be prepared for publication on a schedule determined by the editorial staff. You will receive proofs of the text and diagrams and should check and recheck these proofs for errors. If your article contains a program, check this very carefully by entering it into your machine. If corrections are necessary, print them on the same printer you used for the original so we can incorporate then into the original. Your reputation (and ours) rests on your care at this point. It is too late for rewriting, so just correct any errors and rush the proofs back. Then begin work on your next *80-Microcomputing* article.

Important: All programs submitted to *80-Microcomputing* must be in a camera-ready condition. This means that programs should be a printout (single-spaced) and not typed. If you don't have a printer, borrow one. Programs may be typed as a last resort, but they must be single-spaced and legible. (Type carefully to avoid having to make corrections; use a carbon, rather than a fabric, ribbon). Don't print programs on newsprint, colored paper or lined paper. Use white paper only. *80-Microcomputing* employs the photo-offset printing process. If programs you send us are fuzzy, gray, smudged, etc., that's how they'll look in the magazine. Don't make us have to return programs to be redone.

T.M.

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